

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS
EASTERN DIVISION**

JOHN BURNETT,
ADC #160893

PLAINTIFF

v.

2:18CV00041-JM-JTK

WENDY KELLEY

DEFENDANT

PROPOSED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INSTRUCTIONS

The following recommended disposition has been sent to United States District Court Judge James M. Moody, Jr. Any party may serve and file written objections to this recommendation. Objections should be specific and should include the factual or legal basis for the objection. If the objection is to a factual finding, specifically identify that finding and the evidence that supports your objection. An original and one copy of your objections must be received in the office of the United States District Court Clerk no later than fourteen (14) days from the date of the findings and recommendations. The copy will be furnished to the opposing party. Failure to file timely objections may result in waiver of the right to appeal questions of fact.

If you are objecting to the recommendation and also desire to submit new, different, or additional evidence, and to have a hearing for this purpose before the District Judge, you must, at the same time that you file your written objections, include the following:

1. Why the record made before the Magistrate Judge is inadequate.
2. Why the evidence proffered at the hearing before the District Judge (if such a hearing is granted) was not offered at the hearing before the Magistrate Judge.

3. The detail of any testimony desired to be introduced at the hearing before the District Judge in the form of an offer of proof, and a copy, or the original, of any documentary or other non-testimonial evidence desired to be introduced at the hearing before the District Judge.

From this submission, the District Judge will determine the necessity for an additional evidentiary hearing, either before the Magistrate Judge or before the District Judge.

Mail your objections and "Statement of Necessity" to:

Clerk, United States District Court
Eastern District of Arkansas
600 West Capitol Avenue, Suite A149
Little Rock, AR 72201-3325

DISPOSITION

I. Introduction

Plaintiff John Burnett, a state inmate confined at the East Arkansas Regional Unit of the Arkansas Department of Correction, filed a Motion to Proceed in forma pauperis in this pro se 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action, alleging denial of a program requisite for his parole.

Having reviewed Plaintiff's Complaint, the Court finds it should be dismissed, for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.

II. Screening

The Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA) requires federal courts to screen prisoner complaints seeking relief against a governmental entity, officer, or employee. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). The Court must dismiss a complaint or portion thereof if the prisoner has raised claims that: (a) are legally frivolous or malicious; (b) fail to state a claim upon which relief may be granted; or (c) seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b).

An action is frivolous if “it lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact.” Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989). Whether a plaintiff is represented by counsel or is appearing pro se, his complaint must allege specific facts sufficient to state a claim. See Martin v. Sargent, 780 F.2d 1334, 1337 (8th Cir.1985). An action fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted if it does not plead “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). In reviewing a pro se complaint under § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must give the complaint the benefit of a liberal construction. Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972). The Court must also weigh all factual allegations in favor of the plaintiff, unless the facts alleged are clearly baseless. Denton v. Hernandez, 504 U.S. 25, 32 (1992).

Additionally, to survive a court's 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) and 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c)(1) screening, a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009), citing Twombly, 550 U.S. at 570. A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged. Twombly, 550 U.S. at 556-7. The plausibility standard is not akin to a “probability requirement,” but it asks for more than a sheer possibility that a defendant has acted unlawfully. Where a complaint pleads facts that are “merely consistent with” a defendant's liability, it “stops short of the line between possibility and plausibility of entitlement to relief.” Id.

III. Facts and Analysis

Plaintiff states he is confined for a sex offense and that completion of a sex offender program is required by state law for parole. (Doc. No. 2, p. 4) He adds that although he was

accepted for the RSVP program at the ADC, Defendant will not provide him the program, in violation of his due process rights. (Id.) He asks for injunctive relief. (Id., p. 5)

The Court finds that Plaintiff's allegations fail to state a claim for relief. The Due Process clause does not create a protected liberty interest in any particular prisoner classification or eligibility for rehabilitative programs. See Moody v. Daggett, 429 U.S. 78, 88 n.9 (1976). In addition, the clause does not create a protected liberty interest in the possibility of future parole or release before expiration of a validly-imposed sentence. See Greenholtz v. Inmates of Nebraska Penal & Corr. Complex, 442 U.S. 1, 7 (1979).

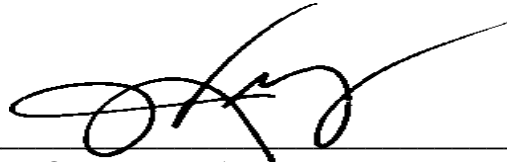
Any liberty interests arising from state law are limited to freedom from restraint which imposes "atypical and significant hardship on the inmate in relation to the ordinary incidents of prison life." Sandin v. Conner, 515 U.S. 472, 484 (1995). In Arkansas, ADC officials have broad discretion in determining an inmate's eligibility to participate in vocational, educational and rehabilitative activities within the prison system. ARK.CODE ANN § 12-29-101(d)(1). To the extent that plaintiff is complaining about a parole plan, he may seek state court review of a denial of his plan and exhaust his state remedy by filing a declaratory judgment action pursuant to ARK. CODE ANN. §§ 16-111-101 et seq., in state court. Lindsey v. Wells, 901 F.2d 96, 97 (8th Cir. 1990). Therefore, the Court finds plaintiff's present complaint should be dismissed for failure to state a claim, and that this dismissal constitutes a "strike" within the meaning of the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA), 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).¹ Accordingly,

¹This statute provides that a prisoner may not file an in forma pauperis civil rights action or appeal if the prisoner has, on three or more prior occasions, filed an action or appeal that was dismissed as frivolous, malicious or for failure to state a claim, unless the prisoner is under imminent danger of serious physical injury.

IT IS, THEREFORE, RECOMMENDED that:

1. Plaintiff's Complaint against Defendant be DISMISSED, for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.
2. Dismissal of this action constitute a "strike" within the meaning of the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA), 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).²
3. The Court certify that an in forma pauperis appeal from an Order and Judgment dismissing this action would not be taken in good faith, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3).

IT IS SO ORDERED this 6th day of March, 2018.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Kearney', is written over a horizontal line.

JEROME T. KEARNEY
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

²The statute provides that a prisoner may not file an in forma pauperis civil rights action or appeal if the prisoner has, on three or more prior occasions, filed an action or appeal that was dismissed as frivolous, malicious or for failure to state a claim, unless the prisoner is under imminent danger of serious physical injury.